

VLR 12/6/6  
NRHP 3/30/7

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
REGISTRATION FORM

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form (National Register Bulletin 16A). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the information requested. If any item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions. Place additional entries and narrative items on continuation sheets (NPS Form 10-900a). Use a typewriter, word processor, or computer, to complete all items.

1. Name of Property

historic name Buffalo Mountain Presbyterian Church and Cemetery  
other names/site number 013-5016

2. Location

street & number 2102 Childress Road not for publication \_\_\_\_\_  
city or town Willis vicinity X  
state Virginia code VA county Carroll code 035 Zip 24380

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1986, as amended, I hereby certify that this X nomination request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60. In my opinion, the property X meets \_\_\_ does not meet the National Register Criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant \_\_\_ nationally \_\_\_ statewide X 1 o ~ ~ # (~ . See continuation sheet for additional comments)

[Signature] 2/12/2007  
Signature of certifying official Date  
Virginia Department of Historic Resources  
State or Federal agency and bureau

In my opinion, the property, meets \_\_\_ does **not** meet the National Register criteria. ( \_\_\_ See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of commenting or other official Date  
\_\_\_\_\_  
State or Federal agency and bureau

4. National Park Service Certification

I, hereby certify that this property is  
entered in the National Register  
See continuation sheet. Signature of Keeper \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_ determined eligible for the National Register  
\_\_\_ See continuation sheet.  
\_\_\_ determined **not** eligible for the National Register Date of Action \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_ removed from the National Register  
\_\_\_ other (explain): \_\_\_\_\_

U. S. Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

Buffalo Mountain Presbyterian Church and Cemetery  
Carroll County, Virginia

**5. Classification**

**Ownership of Property** (Check as many boxes as apply)

- private
- public-local
- public-State
- public-Federal

**Category of Property** (Check only one box)

- building(s)
- district
- site
- structure
- object

**Number of Resources within Property**

Contributing	Noncontributing	
<u>  2  </u>	<u>  0  </u>	buildings
<u>  1  </u>	<u>  0  </u>	sites
<u>  0  </u>	<u>  0  </u>	structures
<u>  0  </u>	<u>  0  </u>	objects
<u>  3  </u>	<u>  0  </u>	Total

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register   0  

Name of related multiple property listing (Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing.)

Reverend Robert Childress Presbyterian Rock Churches, MPD

**6. Function or Use**

**Historic Functions** (Enter categories from instructions)

Cat:   Religion   Sub:   religious facility    
  secondary structure     springhouse    
  funerary     cemetery  

**Current Functions** (Enter categories from instructions)

Cat:   Religion   Sub:   religious facility    
  secondary structure     springhouse    
  funerary     cemetery  

**7. Description**

**Architectural Classification** (Enter categories from instructions)

  Gothic Revival  

**Materials** (Enter categories from instructions)

foundation   concrete    
roof   asphalt    
walls   stone    
other   wood  

**Narrative Description** (Describe the historic and current condition of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

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### 8. Statement of Significance

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**Applicable National Register Criteria** (Mark "x" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property for National Register listing)

- A Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.
- B Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.
- C Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.
- D Property has yielded, or is likely to yield information important in prehistory or history.

**Criteria Considerations** (Mark "X" in all the boxes that apply.)

- A owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes.
- B removed from its original location.
- C a birthplace or a grave.
- D a cemetery.
- E a reconstructed building, object or structure.
- F a commemorative property.
- G less than 50 years of age or achieved significance within the past 50 years.

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**Areas of Significance** (Enter categories from instructions) Religion, Social History, Architecture

**Period of Significance** 1929-1956

**Significant Dates** 1929

**Significant Person** (Complete if Criterion B is marked above) N/A

**Cultural Affiliation** N/A

**Architect/Builder** N/A

**Narrative Statement of Significance** (Explain the significance of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

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### 9. Major Bibliographical References

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**Bibliography**

(Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form on one or more continuation sheets.)

**Previous documentation on file** (NPS)

- preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested.
- previously listed in the National Register
- previously determined eligible by the National Register
- designated a National Historic Landmark
- recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey # \_\_\_\_\_
- recorded by Historic American Engineering Record # \_\_\_\_\_

**Primary Location of Additional Data**

U. S. Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

Buffalo Mountain Presbyterian Church and Cemetery  
Carroll County, Virginia

- State Historic Preservation Office
- Other State agency
- Federal agency
- Local government
- University
- Other

Name of repository: Virginia Department of Historic Resources

**10. Geographical Data**

Acreage of Property approx. 3.2 acres

UTM References (Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet)

Zone	Easting	Northing	Zone	Easting	Northing	Zone	Easting	Northing	Zone	Easting	Northing
1 17	542966	4070073	2 17	543073	4070109	3 17	543070	4070163	4 17	543123	4070166
5 17	543126	4070100	6 17	543073	4070092	7 17	543025	4069968	___ See continuation sheet.		

Verbal Boundary Description (Describe the boundaries of the property on a continuation sheet.)

Boundary Justification (Explain why the boundaries were selected on a continuation sheet.)

**11. Form Prepared By**

name/title: Randle Brim, John Kern, and Michael Pulice  
 Organization: Virginia Department of Historic Resources date December, 2005  
 street & number: 1030 Penmar Ave SE telephone 540-857-7586  
 city or town Roanoke state VA zip code 24013

**Additional Documentation**

Submit the following items with the completed form:

**Continuation Sheets**

**Maps** A USGS map (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.  
 A sketch map for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources.

**Photographs** Representative black and white photographs of the property.

**Additional items** (Check with the SHPO or FPO for any additional items)

**Property Owner**

(Complete this item at the request of the SHPO or FPO.)

name Rev. Robert R. Tolar, Sr. (contact)  
 street & number 2102 Childress Road telephone \_\_\_\_\_  
 city or town Willis state VA zip code 24380

**Paperwork Reduction Act Statement:** This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listings. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C. 470 et seq.).

**Estimated Burden Statement:** Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 18.1 hours per response including the time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the Chief, Administrative Services Division, National Park Service, P.O. Box 37127, Washington, DC 20013-7127; and the Office of Management and Budget, Paperwork Reductions Project (1024-0018), Washington, DC 20503.

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## 7. Summary and Site

The Buffalo Mountain Church and cemetery are located on the Carroll/Floyd County line, at the intersection of county roads 626 (Buffalo Rd) and 628. The site is surrounded by rolling pasturelands and wooded sections. High mountains, most notably Buffalo Mountain, are seen further afield. The cemetery is located no more than 100 yards away from the church, directly across the intersection (626 & 628). The Carroll/Floyd County line crosses between the church and cemetery, therefore the cemetery is in Floyd County. The cemetery is historically significant as part of the church's story and thus is considered a *contributing site* for the purposes of this nomination. Just down the hill from the church and across Rt. 626 is a small (8' x 20') springhouse with the same exterior stone treatment as the church and an overhanging front gable roof. The Buffalo Mountain Mission School (017-0001) is also just down the hill from the church, but to the southwest, and, although eventually associated with the church, the school (1922) predates the church and cemetery, and is considered a separate resource, not included in this nomination.

### Description

The Buffalo Presbyterian Church is rock-faced frame edifice with a nave plan and front and rear transepts. The front transept extends out 6 feet to either side of the nave and its west elevations are incorporated into the front facade, while the rear transept extends 10 feet to each side and its east elevations are incorporated into the rear facade. The nave itself is 33 feet wide and 80 feet long, and reaches more than two stories in height. Beneath the main floor is a full basement with a walk-out at the rear. The roof of all parts of the building are of gable form, steeply-pitched, and covered with standing seam sheet metal. The principal facade faces west and is composed of three bays delineated by pilaster-like, shouldered buttresses with beveled, cast-concrete copings at the shoulders and top. There are two identical buttresses on each side of the nave, delineating three windows bays on each elevation. The main entrance is round-arched or "compass-headed" and is centered on the front elevation. Within the semi-circular transom is lead tracery stained glass. The doors are folding "French doors" with multiple panes of clear glass. The flanking front bays contain compass-headed windows of lead-camed stained glass. Above the front entrance is a smaller version of the lower windows. The rear façade looks similar to the front, although it has a simple basement door at the ground level of the central bay, a small, square, fixed-sash stained window above the door, and six-over-six sash basement windows in the flanking bays. Above the basement windows are tall, slender

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compass-headed, stained-glass windows identical to those on the other elevations, lighting the nave. In the rear gable end is a smaller version of the windows, identical to the one in the front gable. Near the top of all four transept gable ends are smaller circular vents without window glass. There are four

fieldstone chimneys with concrete copings--one at each side elevation intersection of transept and nave, rising out of the roof near the eaves. Soffits and fascia are of wood, painted white. At the front-left (NW) corner of the church, about knee-level, is a granite date stone reading "Buffalo Mountain Presbyterian Church" and the date "1929." Like the other rock churches, the interior of the Buffalo Church is plain and simple, and in excellent condition. The walls are plastered, or in some cases, sheetrocked, and the ceiling is treated with white acoustic tiles. The floor is exposed 2-inch hardwood boards with a deep reddish-brown color. The interior is well-lit via the many large windows. There are two columns of early-period pine pews facing the rear of the church, with aisles on both sides.

### **Cemetery and Springhouse**

The Buffalo Mountain Cemetery has a continuous wall of mortared quartzitic fieldstones, matching the church exterior, with square pillars of the same materials at the corners and spaced intermediately along each wall. The surrounding landscape and the majestic Buffalo Mountain are viewed in spectacular fashion from the cemetery. The walls or enclosures surrounding the cemeteries are considered to be part of the cemeteries, rather than separate resources for the purposes of this nomination, but they are indeed important parts of each cemetery, and of each church's legacy.

Also located within the nominated parcel is a small stone springhouse on the grounds below Buffalo Mountain Church. Built during the same period as the church for use by its members and clergy, it is historically significant and therefore is also identified as a *contributing* resource in this nomination.

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## 8. Statement of Significance

### Summary and Justification of Criteria

Buffalo Mountain Presbyterian Church is one of the six Childress rock-faced churches located in the Virginia counties of Floyd, Carroll, and Patrick, built between 1919 and the early 1950s by Presbyterian minister Robert W. Childress. The six churches are significant in their embodiment of Appalachian patterns of Presbyterian religious worship and Presbyterian social activism in western Virginia. The churches also tell the story of the remarkable ministry of Robert W. Childress, who brought spiritual faith and social awakening to the people of the central portion of the Blue Ridge Province in Virginia. As such, the Buffalo Mountain Church is significant under Criterion A in the areas of Religion and Social History, and under Criterion C for its unique architecture. The period of significance is from 1929, the year of its construction, to 1956, the year of Robert Childress's death.

### Historical Background

Bob Childress preached at Buffalo Mission School for three years after he arrived at the Buffalo community in the spring of 1926 following his graduation from Union Theological Seminary in Richmond. Childress kept a journal of his activities from Buffalo for three winter months, probably in 1928, at the request of Home Mission headquarters. In one January week he had car trouble, got wood for the Mission School furnace, worked on his car, visited thirteen homes, got snowbound, visited five homes on horseback, and conducted chapel, night services, and three Sunday services, but he couldn't get to Slate Mountain. During the first week in March he conducted chapel, visited a bereaved family, held a song service, attended Hillsville court and had cases dismissed against four young men who had disturbed church service, attended a road meeting, made a night address, taught class at Buffalo Mission, preached afterward at Meadows of Dan and Indian Valley, built a stage at Buffalo Mission School, held a cottage prayer service, got stuck in the mud, and took three people to doctor appointments in Floyd.<sup>1</sup>

The Hillsville court cases Childress asked to have dismissed may have been against young men who "rocked," that is, threw rocks at the Mission School, breaking windows and threatening to come inside. Childress had visited fieldstone churches in Tennessee when Presbyterian church headquarters asked him to travel there to tell the story of the mountain missions. Childress learned that the beautiful fieldstone churches in Tennessee were not expensive to build with

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donated manpower, and he may have thought it better to rock-face the Buffalo church than to have a frame church “rocked” by young men who just didn’t behave.<sup>2</sup> At any rate, after the Buffalo community first met to create a Presbyterian church and established session minutes in December 1927 with elders J. M. Sutphin, H. E. Branscome, and Bailey Goad, Childress called for the church to be built of fieldstone.<sup>3</sup>

The first session meeting for Buffalo Church took place at the Mission School on December 18, 1927. J. M. Sutphin was elected clerk, a position he held for more than thirty years. His first appointment was to approach the people in the Buffalo community who were members of Jacksonville Presbyterian Church in the Town of Floyd and to invite them to place their membership with Buffalo Church. The first Buffalo session meeting closed in prayer after thirty minutes spent in studying the book of church order. At a Buffalo session meeting held at the Mission School on April 22, 1928, Bob Childress’s wife Lelia was “examined and admitted to the sealing ordinance of the Lord’s Supper.”<sup>4</sup>

Dauids reports on construction of Buffalo Mountain Church during the summer of 1929. Childress secured a building loan from Elbert Weeks of the Willis bank. Buffalo elder Bailey Goad suggested building the church above the Mission School where men had congregated to drink and enjoy the view across the valley of the Buffalo. Men cut trees and skidded them to the church site with oxen. They sawed oak for beams and poplar for siding, dug out the basement, and laid the foundation. Bob Childress announced a contest to bring the prettiest quartz stone, along with loads of fieldstone, for the church walls. Buffalo elder J. M. Sutphin supervised mortaring the stone into place. The congregation held a session meeting at their new church early in September and voted unanimously to change their name from Buffalo View to Buffalo Mountain Presbyterian Church. The new building was dedicated September 19, 1929, and Rev. Childress began his pastorate there, a pastorate at the mother church that lasted more than twenty years and accomplished the creation of five more rock-faced churches.<sup>5</sup>

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**8. Endnotes**

1. Davids, *The Man Who Moved a Mountain*, 138-139.
2. *Ibid.*, 139, 145.
3. Randle Brim, "To Conquer the Buffalo," *Simple Pleasures*, November 2005; and digital transmission of Buffalo Mountain Presbyterian Church Session Minutes, September 2005.
4. Brim, research in Buffalo Mountain Presbyterian Church Session Minutes; *Simple Pleasures*, November 2004; and personal communication, September 2005.
5. Davids, *The Man Who Moved a Mountain*, 150-151. Brim, *Simple Pleasures*, November 2004; and personal communication, September 2005.

**9. Bibliography**

Abingdon Presbytery, Wytheville, Virginia. Published minutes, 1916-1944.

Brim, Randle. *Simple Pleasures*. Monthly publication of Mount Airy News, North Carolina. November 2004 "Buffalo Community is Home to First Rock Church." Vol. IX, No. 8, 16, 19-20.

Brim, Randle.

April 2005, personal communication, Stuart, Virginia.

September 2005, personal communication.

September 2005, digital annotation of articles in *Simple Pleasures*, July-December 2004.

September 2005, digital images of session minutes for Bluemont, Slate Mountain, Dinwiddie, Buffalo Mountain, and Willis Churches.

Carroll County, Commissioner of Revenue, Tax Valuation Record. Hillsville, Virginia.

Davids, Richard C. *The Man Who Moved a Mountain*. Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1970. Paperback edition, 1972.

Nance, Donald, formerly with Abingdon Presbytery, Wytheville, Virginia. Personal communication, August 2005.

Slate, Richard, elder of Dinwiddie Presbyterian Church since 1947. Personal communication, September 2005.

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**10. Geographical Data**

**Verbal Boundary Description**

The boundary of the nominated parcel includes only the church, cemetery, and springhouse and the immediate grounds around them, as shown on the accompanying GIS-produced aerial image. The following UTM points designate the boundary polygon as it is being nominated: 1. 17 542966 4070073 2. 17 543073 4070109 3. 17 543070 4070163 4. 17 543123 4070166 5. 17 543126 4070100 6. 17 543073 4070092 7. 17 543025 4069968

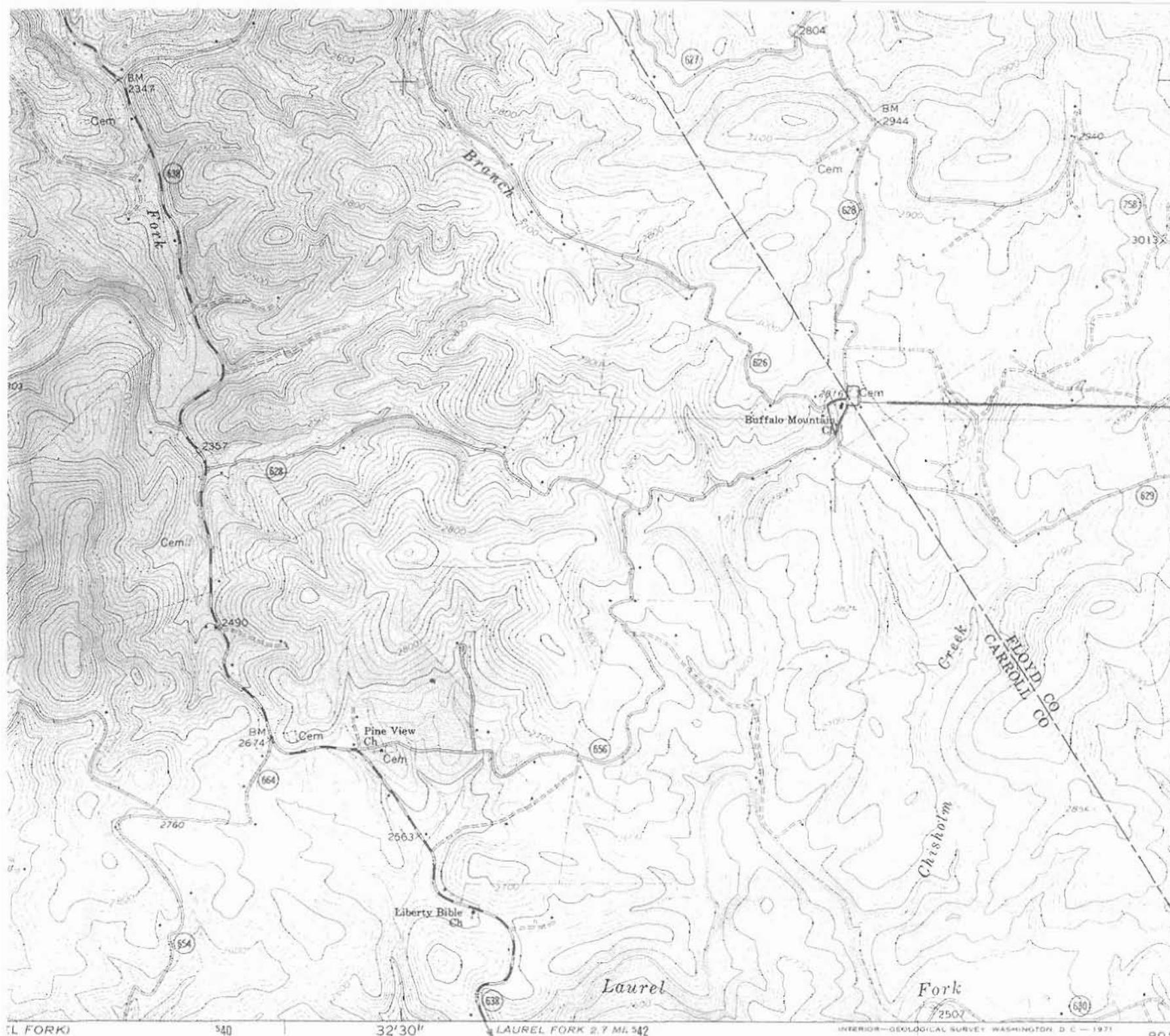
**Boundary Justification**

The nominated boundary corresponds exactly to that of the original church and cemetery parcel.

**Photographs**

Buffalo Mountain Presbyterian Church (DHR #070-5044)  
Carroll County, Virginia  
Date: December 2005  
Photographer: Michael J. Pulice  
Negative No. 22018

1. Church exterior, facing southeast.
2. Church, front (north) elevation.
3. Church exterior, facing southwest.
4. Church, rear (south) elevation.
5. Church interior, facing rear of sanctuary.
6. Church interior, windows.
7. Church interior, window detail.
8. Springhouse, facing southeast.
9. Springhouse, facing northeast.
10. Cemetery with Buffalo Mountain in background, facing northeast.



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01'30"

BUFFALO  
MOUNTAIN  
PRESBYTERIAN  
CHURCH  
AND CEMETERY  
CARROLL CO., VA  
UTM ZONE 17

1. 542966 E  
4070073 N
2. 543073 E  
4070109 N
3. 543070 E  
4070163 N
4. 543123 E  
4070166 N
5. 543126 E  
4070100 N
6. 543073 E  
4070092 N
7. 543025 E  
4069968 N